

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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P R 130200Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5277
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 5599

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MY
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED; ELECTIONS DUE JULY 8

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 5052 DTG 020845Z JUN 78

1. SUMMARY. THE MALAYSIAN PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN
DISSOLVED AS OF JUNE 12, AND THE ELECTION HAS BEEN
SET FOR JULY 8. EXCEPT IN SABAH, SARAWAK AND KELANTAN, THE
STATE ASSEMBLIES HAVE ALSO ALL BEEN DISSOLVED AND STATE
ELECTIONS WILL COINCIDE WITH THOSE FOR PARLIAMENT. THE UMNO
GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION.
IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE RULING NATIONAL FRONT COALITION WILL
ENTER THE ELECTIONS WITH MOST OF ITS INTERNAL DISPUTES
SETTLED, WILL DEFINE THE TERMS UNDER WHICH THE
ELECTIONS WILL BE RUN, AND WILL FACE A FRAGMENTED
OPPOSITION. BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS THE
FRONT IS THEREFORE EXPECTED TO SCORE ANOTHER OVER-
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WHELMING VICTORY IN BOTH THE NATIONAL AND STATE
ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 11 THE KING, ACTING ON THE ADVICE OF
THE PRIME MINISTER, ANNOUNCED THE DISSOLUTION OF THE
MALAYSIAN PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVE JUNE 12. ACCORDING
TO THE MALAYSIAN CONSTITUTION, PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

MUST BE HELD WITHIN SIXTY DAYS OF THE DISSOLUTION, BUT ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, JULY 8. THERE MUST BE A MINIMUM OF THREE WEEKS BETWEEN THE DISSOLUTION AND THE ELECTION AND A SHORT CAMPAIGN PERIOD IS VIEWED AS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO AVOID A BUILDUP OF THE KIND OF RACIAL FRICTION WHICH LED TO THE MAY 1969 RIOTING JUST AFTER THAT YEAR'S LENGTHY AND BITUPERATIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE NOMINATION DATE WILL BE JUNE 21. PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN ANNOUNCED THAT ALL THE STATE ASSEMBLIES, EXCEPT THOSE IN SABAH, SARAWAK AND KELANTAN (SEE REFTTEL), WILL ALSO BE DISSOLVED ON JUNE 12, AND THUS TEN STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WILL COINCIDE WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTION.

3. FOR THE PAST YEAR, AS RUMORS OF AN EARLY ELECTION GREW, THE NF APPEARED RENT WITH DISSENSION AS VARIOUS FACTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS MANY VERED FOR ADVANTAGE IN THE ALLOCATION OF ELECTORAL SEATS. WITHIN THE DOMINANT UNITED MALAYS NATIONAL ORGANIZATION 8UMNO), THIS MANIFESTED ITSELF MOST PROMINENTLY IN A SERIES OF CHALLENGES TO THE CHIEF MINISTERS IN VARIOUS STATES. THE OTHER MALAY PARTY IN THE NF, THE ISLAMIC PARTY (PAS) PUSHED THE SAME LINE TOO HARD AND WAS EXPELLED FROM THE COALITION. AMONG THE NON-MALAY PARTIES IN THE NF THIS DIVISIVENESS HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN EXPRESSED IN JOCKEYING FOR SEAT ALLOCATIONS IN EAST MALAYSIA (FOR SABAH AND SARAWAK PARLIAMENTARY SEATS) AND IN CHINESE MAJORITY AREAS LIKE PENANG AND PERAK. MOST CONFLICTS WITHIN THE NF NOW SEEM RESOLVED. FOLLOWING A JUNE 10 MEETING OF THE NF SUPREME COUNCIL (AT WHICH PM HUSSEIN ANNOUNCED THE ELECTION SCENARIO), PRESS REPORTS ALL REFLECTED HARMONY WITHIN THE COALITION, EVEN AS NF LEADERS DISCUSSED SOME OF THE MAJOR POINTS OF CONTENTION, E.G., WHICH CHIEF MINISTERS WILL BE REPLACED AFTER THE ELECTION AND THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS AMONG THE CHINESE-BASED PARTIES IN VARIOUS STATES. BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE NF LEADERS, WHILE NOT COMPLACENT, ARE FACING THE COMING ELECTION WITH CONFIDENCE.

4. BY CONTRAST, THE OPPOSITION, EVEN THOUGH IT HAS BEEN JOINED BY PAS AND IS THEREFORE EXPECTED TO CONTEST MOST IF NOT ALL SEATS (IN 1974 MANY NF CANDIDATES WERE ELECTED UNOPPOSED), IS IN CONSPICUOUS DISARRAY. THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY OF THE LEFT, THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (DAP) HAS IN RECENT MONTHS

SEEN THE DEFECTION OF SEVERAL MAJOR LEADERS (ALTHOUGH NOT TO THE NF; THEY HAVE FORMED NEW OPPOSITION PARTIES OR DROPPED OUT OF POLITICS). DAP OPPOSITION LEADER LIM KIT SIANG WAS ARRESTED LAST MONTH FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT AND FACES TRIAL JULY 17. MUCH OF PAS' FORMER SUPPORT HAS GONE TO THE NEWLY-FORMED BERJASA PARTY WHICH DEFEATED PAS IN A BY-ELECTION JUNE 10 AND WHICH HAS APPLIED TO JOIN THE NF. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ALL FACE SERIOUS MONEY PROBLEMS.

5. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH IS CALCULATED TO WORK TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE OPPOSITION IS THE EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PUBLIC RALLIES WILL BE BANNED
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DURING THE COMING CAMPAIGN, OSTENSIBLY ON SECURITY

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5. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH IS CALCULATED TO WORK TO

THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE OPPOSITION IS THE EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PUBLIC RALLIES WILL BE BANNED DURING THE COMING CAMPAIGN, OSTENSIBLY ON SECURITY GROUNDS. MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL POLICE CHIEF HAS ALREADY ISSUED A WARNING THAT SPECIAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WILL BE NECESSARY DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE AND AFTER JUNE 20, THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE START OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM) REBELLION AGAINST THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. THE GOM IS CONCERNED THAT THE CPM WILL ATTEMPT ASSASSINATIONS OR OTHER SPECTACULAR DISPLAYS TO CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY AND DEMONSTRATE ITS CONTINUED STRENGTH AND VIABILITY; HENCE A BAN ON ELECTION RALLIES WOULD REFLECT THIS CONCERN. HOWEVER, EXCEPT FOR THE KELANTAN STATE ELECTION LAST MARCH, THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME RALLIES HAVE BEEN BANNED IN A GENERAL ELECTION. THE OPPOSITION WILL MAKE A CONFIDENTIAL

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MAJOR ISSUE OF SUCH A BAN SINCE ONE OF THEIR STRONGEST COMPLAINTS BETWEEN ELECTIONS IS THAT THEY CANNOT HOLD RALLIES EXCEPT DURING ELECTIONS, AND RALLIES ARE AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF COUNTERING THE NF'S USE OF THE GOM-RUN RADIO AND TELEVISION AND THE GOM-INFLUENCED PRESS.

6. A JULY 8 ELECTION DATE MEANS THAT THE UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND PARTY ELECTIONS WILL BE POSTPONED FROM JUNE 22-25 UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION. DATUK HUSSEIN AND THE REST OF THE UMNO LEADERSHIP FACE A MINOR CHALLENGE FROM WITHIN THE PARTY, PRINCIPALLY FROM A SMALL FACTION STILL LOYAL TO THE JAILED FORMER SELANGOR CHIEF MINISTER DATUK HARUN IDRIS WHICH IS EXPECTED TO AIR SOME OF UMNO'S DIRTY LAUNDRY IN PUBLIC, SOMETHING THE LEADERSHIP WOULD PREFER TO SEE POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER GENERAL ELECTIONS. THOUGH THE FACTION POSES NO SERIOUS THREAT TO THE UMNO LEADERSHIP, HUSSEIN HOPES TO ENTER THE UMNO CONVENTION WITH A STRONG POPULAR MANDATE FROM THE GENERAL ELECTION TO DEFLATE THIS CHALLENGE.

7. COMMENT. DESPITE THE INTERNAL SQUABBLING THE NF HAS SEEN IN THE PAST MONTHS, THE MULTIRACIAL COALITION DOES SEEM UNIFIED NOW AND WILL BECOME MORE SO AS THE FORMAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS. THE NF ALSO ENJOYS BROAD POPULAR SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE DOMINANT MALAY MASSES. THE OPPOSITION DIFFICULTIES, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE REAL AND SEEM INCAPABLE OF SOLUTION, AND THE MOMENTUM ALL LIES WITH THE NF. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT NOW THE SIZE OF THE

VICTORY, BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS THERE IS
NO QUESTION THAT THE NF WILL OVERWHELM THE OPPOSITION ON
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JULY 8.
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